

*Key Terrain; Observation and Fields of Fire; Cover and Concealment;
Obstacles; and Avenues of Approach and Retreat at the
Battle of Buckland Mills
19th October 1863*

The National Park Service (NPS) employs a traditional military analysis of battlefields called the KOCO A approach to establish battlefield boundaries. The description of the Buckland battlefield below is adapted from a KOCO A analysis recently conducted for the Buckland Preservation Society.¹

This KOCO A analysis uses defining features—aspects of the landscape that are mentioned in battle accounts and can be located on the ground today. Defining features may be natural (streams or ridges) or cultural (buildings or roads) in origin. Defining features are categorized into Key Terrain; Observation and Fields of Fire; Cover and Concealment; Obstacles; and Avenues of Approach and Retreat as defined in the table below.

Table 1: Definitions of KOCO A Battlefield Evaluation System

Battlefield Element	Definition	Examples
Key Terrain	A portion of the battlefield, possession of which gives an advantage to the possessor.	Road junctions, bridges, high ground.
Observation and Fields of Fire	Any point on the landscape that allows observation of the movements, deployments, and activity of the enemy that is not necessarily key terrain, offers opportunity to see over an area and acquire targets, and allows flat-trajectory weapons to be brought to bear on the enemy.	High ground, sloping approaches to entrenched positions.
Cover and Concealment	Landforms or landscape elements that provide protection from fire and hide troop positions from observation.	Walls, structures, forests, ravines, riverbanks, entrenchments, ditches
Obstacles	Landscape elements that hinder movement and affect the ultimate course of the battle.	Rivers, walls, dense vegetation, fortifications, ravines, ditches.
Avenues of Approach	Corridors used to transfer troops between the core battle area and outer logistical areas.	Roads, paths, creek beds, railroads.

¹ Fonzo, Stephen. 2008. *A Documentary and Landscape Analysis of the Buckland Mills Battlefield (Va042)*. Buckland Preservation Society: Gainesville, Virginia, 29 February.

Summary

On 19 October 1863 more than 10,000 cavalymen engaged in a battle along US Route 29 (the Warrenton Turnpike) across the Fauquier, Prince William county line, concentrating in the area from the bluffs of Cerro Gordo plantation (traversed by modern Route 15) to the village of New Baltimore. The result was a resounding Confederate victory known as "The Buckland Races" because the two armies scattered over a wide area ranging from New Baltimore to Thoroughfare Gap to Haymarket to Gainesville and beyond. Confederate generals J.E.B. Stuart and Fitzhugh Lee used their keen understanding of local terrain to devise a daring, innovative plan incorporating the "pincer movement" seldom used in military history. Consequently, the Confederates successfully routed the entire Federal cavalry under the command of generals John Buford, David M. Gregg, Judson Kilpatrick, Henry E. Davies, and George Armstrong Custer.

In the morning, General Stuart's divisions held the Town of Buckland using its buildings as cover against the Federals who occupied the heights east of Broad Run. Leaving Custer's brigade to guard the town and Buckland Bridge, Davies and Kilpatrick followed Stuart west on the turnpike. When Kilpatrick's Federals attacked from the east Stuart "retreated designedly toward Warrenton" luring the federals down the turnpike into a trap. Confederate General Lee concealed 5,200 cavalymen in "the woods" on the federal left (west of Greenwich Road / State Route 215). Lee sounded cannon signals as the rear of Davies brigade passed the wooded hills and Greenwich Road. Confederates then "came up perpendicular to the pike and cut their column in two," driving General Custer (who brought up the rear of the Federal column) back over the Buckland bridge.

Meanwhile, General Stuart's brigades had charged General Davies at the front of the Federal column causing him to reverse direction to a position "one mile from the Buckland bridge on a low range of hills" where he "took a stand." Lee's men combined forces with Stuart's, attacking furiously the Federal front, flank and rear driving the remaining US Cavalry over Broad Run and north in full retreat, many over cliffs to their deaths.

General Robert E. Lee praised his men writing "the plan was well conceived and skillfully executed." Two hundred fifty casualties were reported. Half the Federal's ambulances, wagons of medical stores, ammunitions, personal papers of General Custer, and 200 prisoners were marched to the Warrenton jail.

General Custer wrote the battle "was the most disastrous this division ever passed through ... I can not but regret the loss of so many brave men." Custer had two horses shot out from under him and his hunch to stay back against orders spared the lives of many Michigan cavalry. This has also been called Custer's First Stand.

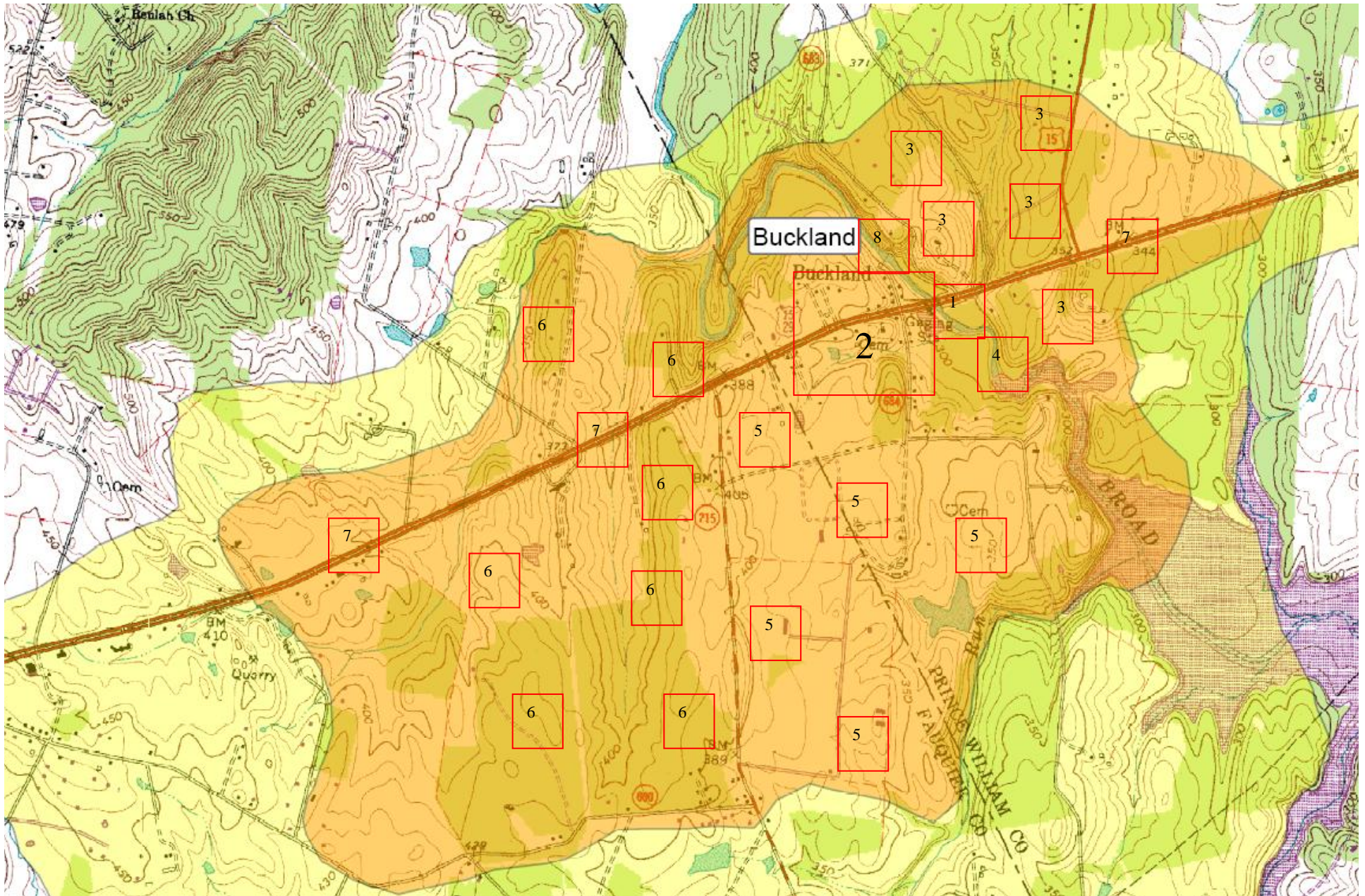
General Kilpatrick wrote "Buckland was the only cavalry victory that the enemy can boast over my command" and relations between him and Custer were strained as a result.

General Stuart wrote "I am justified in declaring the route of the enemy at Buckland the most single and complete that any cavalry has suffered during the war."

This battle was the last cavalry offensive for the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, the final clash of General R.E. Lee's Post-Gettysburg Bristow Campaign and it marked General J.E.B. Stuart's final victory over cavalry. The fighting at Buckland became part of Confederate lore, a savored last victory that would never be forgotten.

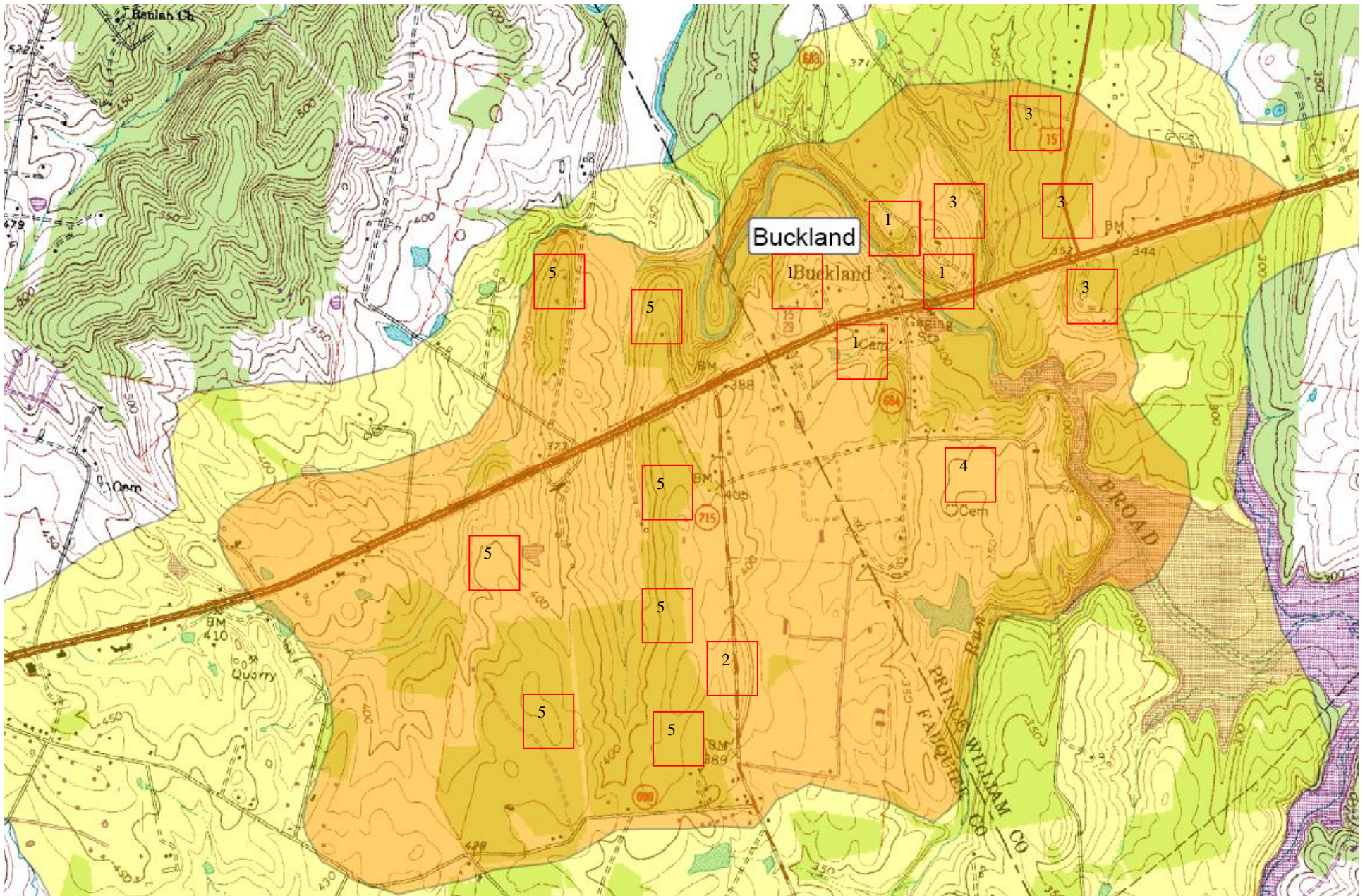
Key Terrain

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Buckland Bridge | 3. Hills at Cerro Gordo | 5. Buckland Farm. | 7. Warrenton Turnpike |
| 2. Town of Buckland | 4. Kinsleys Mill Ford | 6. Wooded Ridge | 8. Buckland Mill Ford |



Observation and Fields of Fire

1. High Ground on both sides of Broad Run
2. Hill at Route 215 (Lee's Artillery)
3. Hills at Cerro Gordo (US Artillery AM CS Artillery PM))
4. Hill on Buckland Farm (Custer's Artillery)
5. Wooded Ridge



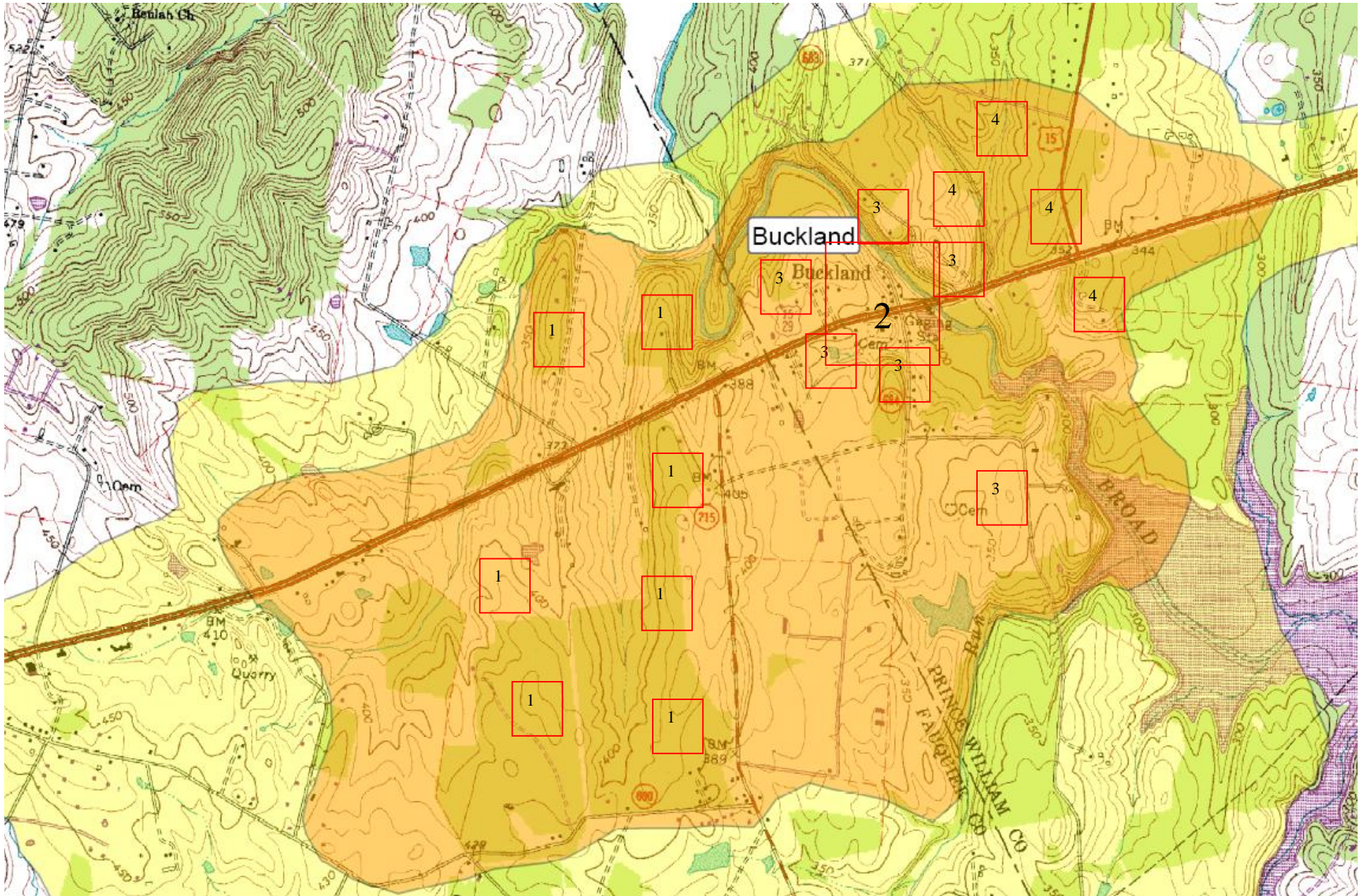
Cover and Concealment

1. Wooded Ridge

2. Town of Buckland

3. Hills around the Town of Buckland

4. Hills at Cerro Gordo



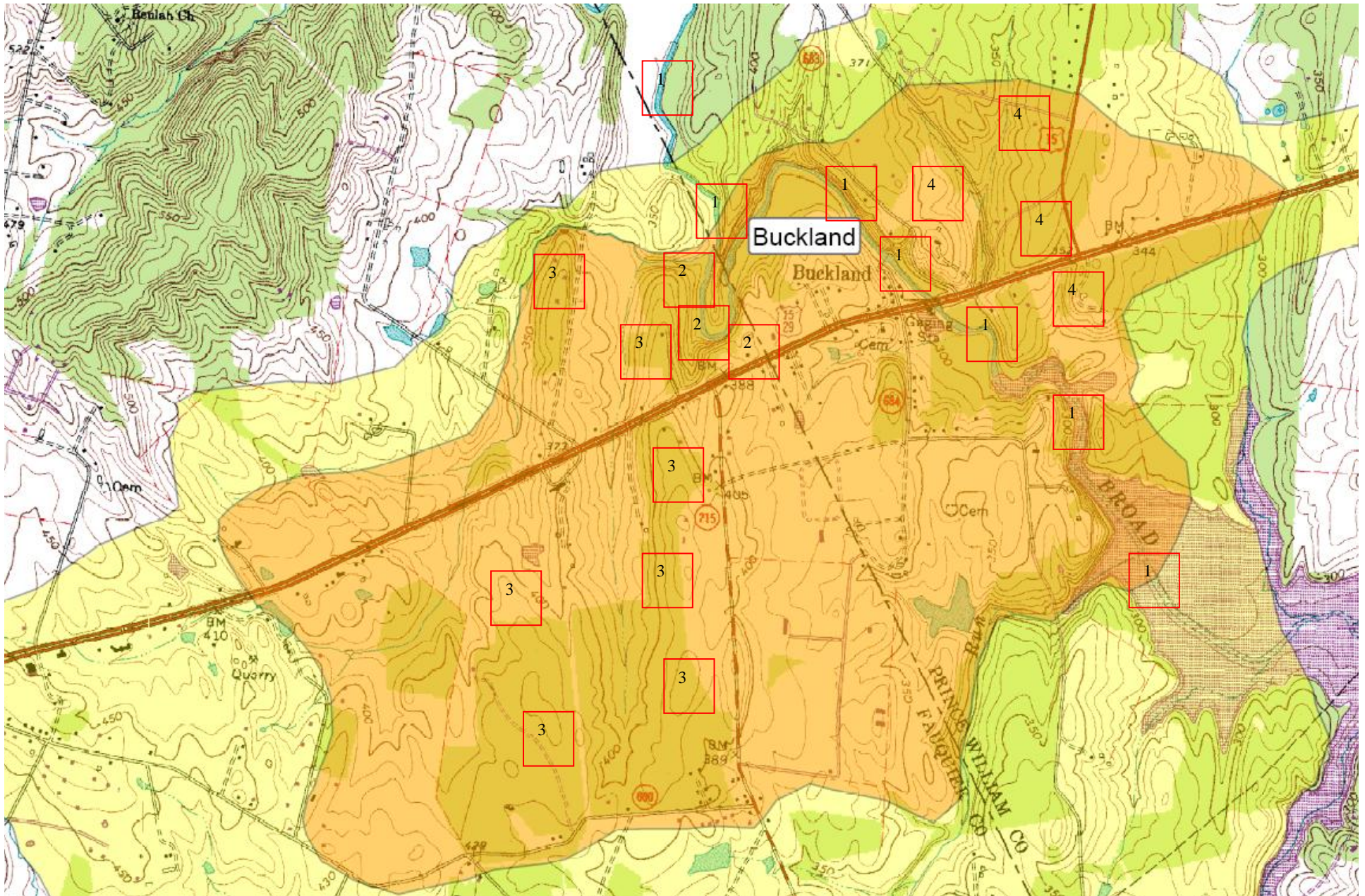
Obstacles

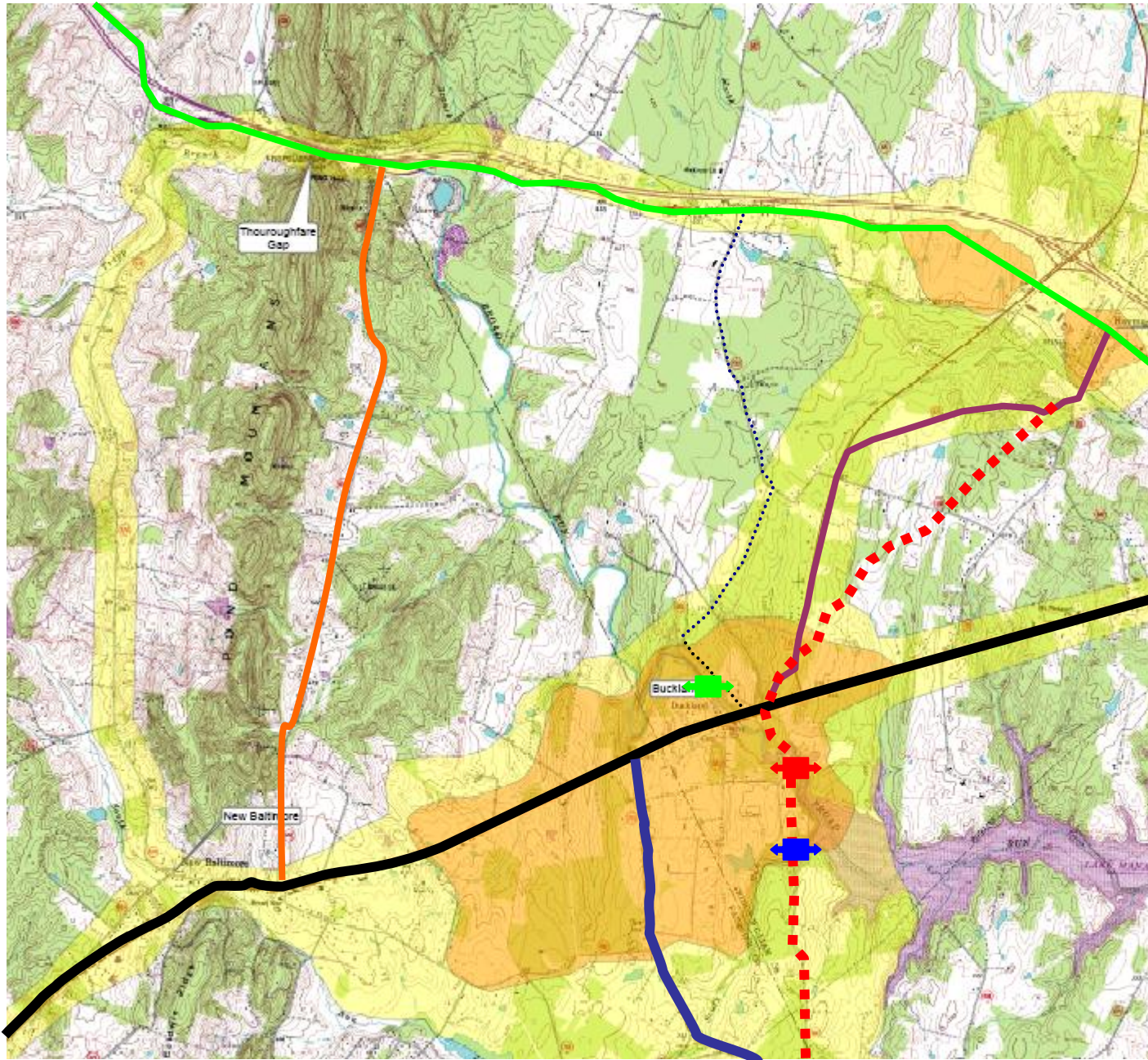
1. Broad Run

2. Cliffs above Broad Run



3. Wooded Ridge

4. Hills at Cerro Gordo





Avenues of Approach

1. Warrenton Turnpike (Route 29)
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2. Greenwich Road (Route 215)
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3. Cerro Gordo Road (old Route 682)
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4. Thoroughfare Road (old Route 682)
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5. Buckland-Haymarket Pike (Route 625)
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6. Carolina Road (old route 625)
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7. Gainesville-Haymarket Pike (Route 55)
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8. Thoroughfare Gap Road
—————
9. Buckland Mill Ford 
10. Kinsley Mill Ford 
11. Unnamed Ford 